



The House-Passed Patients' Bill of Rights vs. the Senate Republican Bill: A Clear Choice

The time to act is now. The House of Representatives has passed a *Patients' Bill of Rights* (H.R. 2723) that puts doctors back in charge of medical decisions and ensures that patients get the care they need. The Senate Republican bill (S. 1344), which is more like an "HMO Protection Act" than a *Patients' Bill of Rights*, fails patients by covering only one-third of privately insured Americans and by omitting key protections, such as ensuring that doctors, not insurers, make medical decisions, and the right to hold HMOs accountable when their decisions kill or injure a patient.

Congress should act quickly to adopt the House-passed *Patients' Bill of Rights*. For more than two years, American families have been waiting for Congress to end managed care abuses by passing a *Patients' Bill of Rights*. Nearly 161 million Americans obtain health coverage through some form of managed care. These Americans face continuous barriers from a system that too often is more interested in lowering costs and increasing profits than in providing quality health care.

Congress should pass a real *Patients' Bill of Rights*. The House-passed patient protection bill offers real patient protections for all privately insured Americans, and is supported by more than 300 groups representing doctors, nurses, and patients, as well as other health providers and advocates for persons with disabilities, children, women and families. The Senate Republican bill is a far cry from meaningful reform, providing a series of hollow, cosmetic measures that will leave insurers and HMOs in charge of medical decisions. In most cases, the provisions in the Senate Republican bill are little more than sham protections—too riddled with loopholes to actually help patients. Its limited provisions apply only to 48 million of the 161 million Americans with private coverage. The Senate bill is supported only by the insurance industry and its allies.

Congress should leave poison pills out of the *Patients' Bill of Rights*. Both the Senate and the House bill include a series of new tax breaks and other provisions that have little or nothing to do with patient protections. Under the guise of promoting affordable health care coverage, provisions relating to Medical Savings Accounts and Association Health Plans may increase the ranks of the under-insured and take away existing patient protections, and threaten to make insurance more expensive for those who maintain traditional, comprehensive coverage. Tax provisions contained in the House bill largely benefit the wealthy and do not help most uninsured Americans. These provisions have no place in a *Patients' Bill of Rights*.